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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: RECALL OF PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage June 13 on the Legislative Yuan's efforts to recall President Chen Shui-bian Tuesday; further investigations into the kickback and murder scandal involving Taiwan's purchase of Lafayette-class frigates; and investigations into President Chen's son-in-law's insider trading scandal and questionable gifts received by First Lady Wu Shu-chen. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a front-page banner headline that read "First Case in [Taiwan's] Constitutional Rule; Recall of President Will Kick off in Legislative Yuan Today," and the pro-status quo "China Times" front-paged "Decisive Battle over Bian's Recall Scheduled for June 27." The "China Times" also ran a banner headline on page two that said "To Act on Recall Motion, Bian Decides to Present Written Statement of Defense."

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" analyzed the reasons why the DPP chose to protect and help President Chen, rather than forcing him to step down. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" supported the motion to recall Chen, and a separate "China Post" editorial said a recent State Department statement welcoming Chen's reaffirmation of the Four Nos pledge provided timely aid to Chen amid the calls to oust him. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, criticized KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou for a lack of strong leadership. End summary.

A) "Better to Jointly Force [Chen Shui-bian] to Step Down Than to Protect and Help [Him] Illicitly"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (6/13):

"The DPP has started to 'protect and help' Chen Shui-bian in an attempt to counterattack the pan-Blue camp's recall motion. The dilemma facing the DPP is: It will ruin the DPP's future should Chen stay on, but the DPP has scruples and thus does not dare to leave Bian unshielded. ...

"The DPP was facing three options in the wake of the exposure of the scandals surrounding Bian's family members: They can jointly work together to force Bian to step down; they can draw a clear line between the party and Bian; or they can protect and help Bian. High-ranking DPP officials evidently chose to protect and help Bian because: First, Bian is the common leader and balancer of all DPP factions. Once Bian resigns, the infighting among various DPP factions will intensify and may likely lead the DPP to split and rot. Second, Annette Lu will succeed him as President should Bian resign, and Su Tseng-chang will be the first one to step down. Such a development would destroy the mutual dependency and interests of

all factions. Third, should the DPP draw a clear line between the party and Bian, and if it turns out that Bian does not fall from power in the end, the DPP will be surely face retaliation, so no one dares to make such a move. Fourth, the most important matter is that the DPP is concerned that it will deal a heavy blow to the native ethnic groups and party morale if Bian is forced to step down. Should it really happen, the pro-unification forces [in Taiwan] will grow stronger, and the deep-Green fundamentalists will alienate themselves from the DPP, a development that will put the DPP in an unfavorable position when it starts campaigning for the 2008 presidential elections. ..."

B) "The Case for Ousting Chen"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in an editorial (6/13):

"President Chen Shui-bian should not lose his position because of the wrongs of others, according to his premier Su Tseng-chang, chairman of the ruling DPP Yu Shyi-kun, and some admirers. But he must be held responsible for making his people's life miserable. Is the president honest and a man of his word? The answer is obviously No for foreign investors in Taiwan and decision-makers in Washington. The Taiwan people's answer is the same emphatic No. ... To demand Chen's early departure from office is not to drive the DPP out of power, because the Constitution assures it ruling status after Chen's resignation. Neither is it 'to fire a gun at a man who is already shot in the knees,' because the one getting shot at is not Chen but Taiwan which has been struggling to stay on its feet after being hurt many times by reckless Chen."

C) "Chen Gets Timely U.S. Aid"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] said in a separate editorial (6/13):

"Besieged by rising calls for him to resign, President Chen Shui-bian turned to the U.S. for support by refreshing a promise not to change Taiwan's status quo. It has worked so far. ... Addressing him as 'president' for the first time in months and specifying 'his remaining two years in office,' the statement offered a clear hint of U.S. preferences. Washington has long been displeased with Chen's anti-China rhetoric and pursuit of Taiwan independence. But having dealt with this 'unpredictable,' 'troublemaking,' 'envelope pusher' for six years, Washington now sees the cornered Taiwan leader as a known quantity, in sharp contrast with his designated successor Vice President Annette Lu should he be forced out prematurely. Lu is U.S.-trained, clean, assertive and a more forceful independence activist than Chen. ..."

D) "Ma's Lack of Leadership Is Showing"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/13):

"The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) yesterday decided to place discussion of the presidential recall motion at the top of the agenda for the extraordinary legislative session that is scheduled to commence today. In the process leading up to this decision, KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou's performance as the leader of the pan-blue camp has been disappointing. Ma seems so weak, helpless and indecisive in the face of pressure from the radical factions both within his party and the pan-blue camp. One cannot help but wonder what kind of hope the KMT has of becoming a politically moderate and mainstream political party in the days to come. ..."

"Ma's leadership faces the threat of being undermined by these internal battles. There is no way he can please everyone. In an effort to consolidate his leadership within not just the KMT but the entire pan-blue camp, however, Ma has apparently caved in to the pressure from the radical factions. One cannot help but wonder what kind of vision Ma has for the KMT. If it is his hope to move his party toward the center of the political spectrum, he has to learn to say no to the hawks - and fast."